New York
Theatre Critics' Reviews
1946

Volume VII Number 22 • Yearly Subscription $25.00 • Week of November 25, 1946

1946 PRODUCTIONS
Premieres in Other Years
Original Reviews Appeared in These Volumes

1945 Vol.

Stage Play	Page
Are You With It?	113
Billion Dollar Baby	61
Brighten the Corner	74
*Carousel	226
Day Before Spring (The)	92
Deep Are the Roots	160
*Dream Girl	66
Dunnigan's Daughter	54
French Touch (The)	77
Glass Menagerie (The)	234
Hamlet	70
Home of the Brave	51
Mermaids Singing (The)	86
Polonaise	149
Pygmalion	57
*Red Mill (The)	141
Rugged Path (The)	109
*State of the Union	102
Strange Fruit	82
Up in Central Park	280
You Touched Me	164

1944 Vol.

*Anna Lucasta	143
Bloomer Girl	118
Dear Ruth	56
Follow the Girls	222
*Harvey	95
I Remember Mama	111
On the Town	45
Song of Norway	149

1943 Vol.

*Oklahoma	141
*Voice of the Turtle (The)	199

1940 Vol.

*Life With Father	457

Asterisks indicate shows scheduled to play week of Nov. 25, 1946

1946 PRODUCTIONS
Premieres During 1946
Reviews Appear in This Volume

Stage Play	Page
Annie Get Your Gun	382
*Another Part of the Forest	247
Antigone	450
Apple of His Eye	463
Around the World	375
Bees and the Flowers (The)	336
*Born Yesterday	466
*Call Me Mister	403
Candida	412
Critic (The)	380
*Cyrano de Bergerac	321
Dancer (The)	368
Duchess Misbehaves (The)	456
Duchess of Malfi (The)	304
*Fatal Weakness (The)	251
*Flag Is Born (A)	348
Flamingo Road	429
Front Page (The)	355
*Gypsy Lady	343
*Happy Birthday	280
Haven (The)	260
Hear That Trumpet	324
Henry IV, Part I	395
Henry IV, Part II	397
*Henry VIII	271
He Who Gets Slapped	426
Hidden Horizon	340
I Like It Here	421
Iceman Cometh (The)	315
January Thaw	469
Jeb	446
*Joan of Lorraine	255
*John Gabriel Borkman	263
Joy Forever (A)	493
*Lady Windermere's Fan	307
Little Brown Jug	438
Loco	301
Lute Song	459
Lysistrata	298
Magnificent Yankee (The)	477
*Made In Heaven	292
Maid in the Ozarks	360
Mr. Peebles and Mr. Hooker	312
Nellie Bly	481
*O Mistress Mine	474
Obsession	330
Oedipus	380
On Whitman Avenue	391
*Park Avenue	275
*Playboy of the Western World (The)	287
*Present Laughter	283
St. Louis Woman	415
Second Best Bed	371
*Show Boat	496
Song of Bernadette (The)	418
Swan Song	386
This, Too, Shall Pass	400
*Three to Make Ready	434
Tidbits of 1946	362
Truckline Cafe	441
Uncle Vanya	389
Yours Is My Heart	351
*What Every Woman Knows	268
Winter's Tale (The)	486
Woman Bites Dog	407
Would-Be Gentleman (The)	490

THEATRE OPENINGS
"Joan of Lorraine" "The Fatal Weakness"
"Another Part of the Forest"
Complete reviews appear in this issue

Asterisks indicate shows scheduled to play week of Nov. 25, 1946

Theatre Critics' Reviews brings you each week the complete reviews as they originally appeared in these New York newspapers

NEW YORK SUN · NEW YORK TIMES · NEW YORK NEWSPAPER PM · NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
NEW YORK POST · NEW YORK DAILY NEWS · NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE · NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN

All Reviews reproduced by permission.

Published by CRITICS' THEATRE REVIEWS, INC. : 235 EAST 22ND STREET, NEW YORK 10, N. Y.

"Another Part of the Forest"

NEW YORK Herald Tribune

NOVEMBER 21, 1946.

By HOWARD BARNES

At Home With the Foxes

LILLIAN HELLMAN is extending her researches into dynastic evil in "Another Part of the Forest." Her new drama turns the clock back on the little foxes of an earlier and better work. With her bitter awareness of human frailty, she has written a savage account of the origins of the Hubbard clan. A splendid company, headed by Patricia Neal, Leo Genn, Percy Waram and Mildred Dunnock interprets her chronicle of tricksters and trollops in the reconstruction period with vivid effect. Unfortunately, honest appraisal of human behavior has been traded for somewhat lurid melodramatics at the Fulton. Miss Hellman's new play is disappointing.

• • •

As a show it is marked by qualities which have been sorely missing in the new plays of the season. It seems scarcely necessary to remind one that the author can write like a streak, can place characters in a sinister juxtaposition which is terrible in itself and cut deep into the inner compulsions of self-seeking parvenus. All this she accomplishes in "Another Part of the Forest," giving moments of tragic splendor to a sort of prologue to "The Little Foxes." The trouble is that the skullduggery is too much a matter of accident to give the offering clarity, wisdom and a certain sympathy. The characters are as remote as they were recognizable and human in the companion piece. Their actions are tricky in the wrong sense of that word.

• • •

Those who witnessed "The Little Foxes" will be those to derive chief delight from this earlier chapter in a tapestry of American life. Ben Hubbard is present as the bungling and predatory heir to a carpet-bagger fortune, snatching his eminence from a loony mother's confession of misery. The proud and unforgiving Regina starts hoarding venom as an errant girl of twenty and the Hubbard patriarch, Marcus, is shown as the source of a family's disintegration through aggrandizement. Miss Hellman has had much to add to her indictment of the little foxes in our past. She fails to make it more revealing than it was in the first place. The moments of solid impact in her drama are few and far between.

• • •

"Another Part of the Forest" achieves most of its mobility and tension in the sheer building of character. Waram is especially terrible as the Hubbard who bred a family of devious parasites. Miss Dunnock does a job with the tragic figure of the mother, who unwittingly confides a sesame to Ben's success and Miss Neal contributes an extraordinarily vital and memorable stage portryal as the girl portrayed as a woman by Tallulah Bankhead in "The Little Foxes." There is no lack of incisive portraiture in this Kermit Bloomgarden production. There are brilliant set designs by Jo Mielziner and wonderful period costumes by Lucinda Ballard. Another Part of the Forest" has dramatic force, but it is not fused in a compelling structure.

'ANOTHER PART OF THE FOREST.'

Play by Lillian Hellman; settings and lighting by Jo Mielziner; costumes by Lucinda Ballard; staged by Miss Hellman; original music by Mark Blitzstein; presented by Kermit Bloomgarden at the Fulton Theater Wednesday evening, November 20, 1946. The cast:

Regina Hubbard	Patricia Neal
John Bagtry	Bartlett Robinson
Lavinia Hubbard	Mildred Dunnock
Coralee	Beatrice Thompson
Marcus Hubbard	Percy Waram
Benjamin Hubbard	Leo Genn
Jacob	Stanley Greene
Oscar Hubbard	Scott McKay
Simon Isham	Owen Cott
Birdie Bagtry	Margaret Phillips
Harold Penniman	Paul Ford
Gilbert Jugger	Gene O'Donnell
Lauretta Simms	Jean Hagen

SYNOPSIS: Act I—A Sunday morning, June, 1880, the Alabama town of Snowden. The side terrace of the Hubbard house. Act II—The next evening. The living room of the Hubbard house. Act III—Early the next morning. The side terrace of the Hubbard house.

PM Exclusive

NOVEMBER 22, 1946.

—*Kronenberger*

Lillian Hellman Writes Another Compelling Drama

PM Reviews

In *Another Part of the Forest*, Lillian Hellman has gone back to the world, to the very characters, of *The Little Foxes;* and Broadway itself must go back to *The Little Foxes* for a play of equal tension and striking power. Once again the monstrous force of villainy is redoubled by the implacable drive with which the author projects it; once again there is a sense of explosion.

The play takes us back to 1880, 20 years before the period of *The Little Foxes*, when the father of Regina, Ben and Oscar Hubbard was very much head of the business and the household. Marcus Hubbard is quite their match in baseness, but a far more complex and interesting character. A pariah in the town he dominates, Marcus is ruthless, sardonic, cruel, with that responsiveness to art so often found in cold, cruel natures, and that sense of pretension so often born of the responsiveness. Married to a woman driven half loony by his treatment and by a sense of guilt about his past, he is jealously indulgent toward Regina, deliberately nasty to Oscar and Ben. The household seethes with hatreds and frustrations, with trickery and treacherousness; for the young Hubbards are not shown becoming little foxes through impact of circumrtance, but as vulpine by nature.

The major conflict in the play is that between Ben—with his furious drive for power—and the father he hates for blocking the way. Foiled and frustrated again and again, Ben stumbles on his mother's guilty secret—something that can make his father the victim of a lynching party; and with this as a whip, brings the old man to his knees. Ben takes over, and Oscar and Regina quickly salute the rising sun.

• • •

Of all this Miss Hellman makes driving theater, and something more than driving theater—something more purposeful, more provocative, more talented. It is just because the play reaches higher ground that one wonders why it does not have quite the stature it should have. The answer, possibly, is that Miss Hellman's fable is not adequate to the force behind it. You cannot write off *Another Part of the Forest* as simply melodrama, for it is the people in the play that stay with us, not the plot. They are vigorous people, and Marcus is perhaps the most interesting character Miss Hellman has ever drawn. Yet to some extent melodrama has been permitted the last word, and the operations of villainy crowd out the inner nature of villains.

Though the third act, where Ben turns the tables on his father, has theatrical punch, it has a kind of *dramatic* inadequacy. For it works things out at the diamond-cut-diamond level of knaves where interest centers in a contest of wits. But for two previous acts we have been involved in much more than a contest of wits; we have been concerned with a passionate conflict of wills. Hence we can't help feeling that the play should be resolved by something from *inside* these people, by an eruption of character rather than a twist of circumstance. All this might well make the play even more violent than it is, but it would sustain the pitch at which Miss Hellman seemed to be working. As it is, one merely has a sense of overloading.

Told as Miss Hellman hald told it, *Another Part of the Forest* has more than a little in common with those sombre Elizabethan "comedies" swarming with cheats and knaves and evildoers. But, by lacking their simpler emotions and by being charged with Miss Hellman's angry heat, it necessarily flows over into the world of drama. The play, compared with *The Little Foxes*, seems less effective but more interesting, less controlled but more complex. And by thinking of the two plays together, one begins to think of Miss Hellman's writing as a whole, of that body of work which, far more than single examples, is the key and criterion for assessing a writer. What we find in such a view, beyond the sense of theater and the technical skill, is a massive force animated by strong personal and moral emotion. It never has yet found its exact trajectory; it has frequently collided with this or that obstruction. But it is there and when it finds just the right object to be exerted upon, it will create something tremendous in the theater.

• • •

I have not space to write as I should of an admirable production. Miss Helllman's staging is firm and incisive, and much of the acting is excellent. Percy Waram is close to superb as Marcus Hubbard, and Mildred Dunnock notably good in the difficult role of his wife. Leo Genn has real force as Ben, and Patricia Neal considerable, if too unmodulated, force as Regina; and there is a beautiful performance of the young Birdie by Margaret Phillips. Joe Mielziner has created outstandingly handsome sets, and Lucinda Ballard some extremly fine costumes.

—LOUIS KRONENBERGER

The New York Times

NOVEMBER 21, 1946

THE PLAY

By BROOKS ATKINSON

To startled theatregoers who were frightened seven years ago by the characters in "The Little Foxes," there's good news today. The previous generation was worse. In "Another Part of the Forest," which was acted at the Fulton last evening, Lillian Hellman has gone back twenty years to see how the horrible Hubbards got that way. Papa Hubbard, who did not appear in "The Little Foxes," turns out to have been more of a scoundrel than his greedy children, who were devouring the earth twenty years later. Obviously they came by their villainy honestly. For Miss Hellman, who is a very industrious playwright with a whim of iron has got enough on the whole tribe of Hubbards to hang them.

* * *

This time her hatred for malefactors of great wealth in post-war Alabama has driven her play straight over the line into old-fashioned melodrama. Her indictment of the Hubbards is a witches' brew of blackmail, insanity, cruelty, theft, torture, insult, drunkenness, with a trace of incest thrown in for good measure and some chamber music in the background. There is hardly a moment when someone is not bellowing at someone else in very bad temper indeed. Patricide or matricide or fratricide are apparently only a few years further back in history, in case Miss Hellman ever takes up the next earlier generation of Hubbard footpods.

* * *

Although Miss Hellman's fury makes her play as a whole look like the de luxe edition of a dime novel, she can write individual scenes of great theatrical intensity. With the collaboration of several superior actors, like Mildred Dunnock, Margaret Phillips, Patricia Neal, Percy Waram and Leo Genn, she has contrived scenes of madness, desperation and venom that have tremendous impact in the theatre. What you may find yourself wondering about is how an author who overwrites a gaudy melodrama can write individual scenes like Birdie's pathetic farewell in the second act with such sure, piercing economy. The Miss Hellman who wrote "Watch on the Rhine" and "The Little Foxes" comes to the surface in "Another Part of the Forest" for big scenes in every act; but not for the play as a whole.

* * *

In the new play the older characters of "The Little Foxes" appear as the children of Marcus Hubbard, the richest and most despised citizen of Snowden, Ala. He grew rich during the Civil War by blockade-running and selling salt to his neighbors at extortionate prices. He was also implicated in a massacre for which his townsfolk would still lynch him if they knew the details of the false passport he had bought to prove his presence elsewhere. "Another Part of the Forest" shows how his eldest son, Ben, turns the tables on his tyrannical father and blackmails the old man into turning over all the Hubbard property.

* * *

As her own director, Miss Hellman has assembled an excellent cast and organized a fiery performance inside a beautiful though ominous exterior setting by Jo Mielziner. Playing the part of the despotic father, Mr. Waran is giving the best performance of his career, redeeming the monstrousness of the character by wit and style. As the demented mother, Miss Dunnock's acting is a superb portrait of terror, pathos and mental confusion. Margaret Phillips combines anguish and good breeding in one excellent scene.

As the old man's daughter and ideal, Patricia Neal catches the bloom and greed of an amoral young woman determined to crush everyone around her. Leo Genn conveys the strength, unscrupulousness and maturity of the elder son, and Scott McKay is good as the young son who has lost his pride. Jean Hagen has an amusing scene as a drunken trollop. As the impoverished son of an aristocratic neighbor, Bartlett Robinson communicates the melancholy and bewilderment of a lad who does not fit a defeated society. There is a sweet performance by Beatrice Thompson as a merciful Negro maid.

Between them, Miss Hellman and the actors make the horrible Hubbards people you cannot ignore. In 1880 they are more despicable than they were in 1900, when "The Little Foxes" sieged upon them. That brings a gleam of hope. If Miss Hellman reverses her field and starts working towards bards will emerge as no worse than the rest of us. By the law of averages there must be some good in such lusty people somewhere along the line.

Journal American

NOVEMBER 21, 1946

At Fulton—'Another Part of the Forest'

By ROBERT GARLAND

As a producer of things theatrical, this Kermit Bloomgarden is a perfectionist. Consider last night at the Fulton. There, from the uncompromising brain of Lillian Hellman, is the well-nigh perfect play. Not content with this, however, Mr. Bloomgarden has given it a well-nigh perfect production. Peerless cast headed by any one of three potential leading ladies. Peerless mise en scene provided by Jo Mielziner. Peerless costumes designed by Lucinda Ballard. And peerless direction furnished by the author.

If this seems unreasonable, make the most of it. But it is not unreasonable, not in the light of last night at the Fulton. Why? Because it is merely a statement of fact when I report that, in "Another Part of the Forest," the distinguished author of "The Children's Hour" and "The Little Foxes," "The Watch on the Rhine" and "The Searching Wind," has written her most distinguished play; that the painstaking producer of "Woman Bites Dog" and "Deep Are the Roots" has given it his most painstaking production.

In a week made memorable by good, better and best—by fine, finer and finest—theatrical endeavors, "Another Part of the Forest" is the first to have its playwright as its star. In "Joan of Lorraine," Maxwell Anderson must share his honors with Ingrid Bergman. In "The Fatal Weakness," George Kelly must share his honors with Ina Claire. But in "Another Part of the Forest" Lillian Hellman must share her honors with no one. With no one, if you insist, but her perfectionistic producer and all the good things that he provides.

* * *

Looking Backward

Watching Miss Hellman's well-nigh perfect play deliberately expand, then deliberately pull itself together up on the Fulton's stage, you are unwittingly reminded of the fine and finer plays that have immediately preceded it to town. And of their fine and finer playwrights. Then, incongruously, maybe, you think of the song Ethel Merman and Ray Middleton enjoy together in "Annie Get Your Gun." Yes, to paraphrase it to yourself, whatever Mr. Anderson and Mr. Kelly can do, Miss Hellman can do better.

Going back 20 years nearer to the American Civil War—beg pardon, the War Between the States—the author displays the Hubbard family of Snowden, Ala., as it is two decades before the curtain rises on "The Little Foxes." A sequel in reverse, "Another Part of the Forest" shows you, in frenetic yet fascinating detail, how the younger Hubbards—Regina and Oscar; Benjamin and the Birdie who was a Bagtry—got that way. And Mama and Papa Hubbard are now added; Lavinia and Marcus.

This time, in the June of 1880, Lavinia and Marcus are the Hubbards about whom Miss Hellman's psychological horror story revolves, becoming, as it does so, another scornful and heartfelt parable of the rise of the Industrial South. Now, as in "The Little Foxes," there are ruthlessness, realism and a fine free scorn for the older trappings of Confederate romanticism. The critic who once wrote those words can write those words again. And doubtless will, quoting from himself by way of Mr. Mantle.

* * *

Praise, Indeed

The potential leading ladies of whom I have written are, in the order of their entry, the Patricia Neal who is Regina, the Mildred Dunnock who is Lavinia, and, I think, the Jean Hagen who is Laurette Sincee. The greatest of these is Mrs. Dunnock. Hers is a performances in a thousand, a three-dimensonial and tragic portrait of a noble lady who has somehow, somewhere, lost her way. And Patricia Neal's Regina is as beautiful as it is good, which makes it as good as it is beautiful.

Old mother Hubbard's horrid husband is Percy Waram, an old hand at this sort of thing, who plays his Marcus to her Lavinia with banked fire and wicked, wandering eye. But all the brothers in "Another Part of the Forest" are valiant actors, making the most of the well-nigh perfect play Lillian Hellman has written and the well-nigh perfect production Kermit Bloomgarden has provided. Returning to the women, keep an appreciative eye on the Coralee of Beatrice Thompson, along with Mr. Mielziner's beautiful backgrounds and Miss Ballard's becoming dresses.

Were I a Mr. Bloomgarden with an assured success such as Miss Hellman's prelude to "The Little Foxes" at the Fulton, I would revive the first play, which is the second play, later on. And without a star, but with as many members of the current cast as possible. Then, early in the Summer, I would play "Another Part of the Forest" and "The Little Foxes" alternately, and both on days where there are afternoon and evening performances . . . Meantime, "Another Part of the Forest" is tops in town, as a play, a performance and a production.

DAILY NEWS

NOVEMBER 21, 1946

'Another Part of Forest' Makes 'The Little Foxes' a Mere Warmup

By JOHN CHAPMAN

From a less practiced pen than Lillian Hellman's, or with a less remarkably able cast, "Another Part of the Forest" might have been so overwrought as to be funny. Before last evening's dinnertime premiere of this play at the Fulton Theatre I had not seen so much melodrama since Kathlyn Williams was braving the lions of the Selig zoo in "The Adventures of Kathlyn." And I had never seen so many villains.

But, since Miss Hellman knows her business, her exercise in malevolence held me and excited me. It is evident now that our stage has of late been polite to the point of tedium, and what it has needed is a good stiff dose of pure hellishness. Miss Hellman, author of "The Children's Hour" and "The Little Foxes," is just the girl to give it to us.

Her new play is a prologue to "The Little Foxes." Having known from the announcements that it deals with the lives of Regina Hubbard Giddens and two of her rascally brothers—Ben and Oscar—when they are 20 years younger, I expected that "Another Part of the Forest" might show me how they got the way they were when I first met them in the season of 1939. I was wrong. They were just as dreadful in 1880 as they were in 1900, and at that time their father was living and he was a pip.

Trading With the Enemy.

In 1880 the Hubbards are living in Snowden, Ala., in a very fine house built by Jo Mielziner. Ola Marcus Hubbard, the father, has developed the family fortune he started during the Civil War by dealing with the Union enemy and smuggling salt to desperate Confederates for $8 a bag.

Since the war he has spawned two scoundrelly sons and a witch of a daughter; has earned the hatred of the whole town; has driven his sweet, frail wife to mild insanity; has ruined gentle landholders by foreclosing mortgages—and has enjoyed himself thoroughly.

I shan't attempt to tell you much of what goes on in the Hubbard manse, for I couldn't do it as well as Miss Hellman has and the telling would therefore spoil things for you. But you may be informed that nobody loves ANYBODY there, except that poor, batty old Lavinia is a generally affectionate soul and her colored servant, Coralee, comforts her.

Misses Overplaying.

Miss Hellman writes with punch and she punches fast. Hatreds blaze like a string of firecrackers and dirty deeds abound. The dirtiest dog of all is old Marcus, but in the end he is beaten by his ruthless elder son, Ben. And that is how Ben and Regina and Oscar won the stake which kept them going until they got into "The Little Foxes," which was very successful.

Miss Hellman almost overplays her hand in dwelling too long upon Ben's final triumph—almost, but not quite. And her company, which she directed with fascinating skill, never overplays its hand. As Marcus, Percy Waram is supremely satanic. As Ben, Leo Genn equals him in cruelty and outdistances him in craftiness. As Regina, Patricia Neal is the handsomest and toughest snake-woman I ever saw, making Tallulah Bankhead look like Themesong.

In the role of Lavinia, played by Patricia Collinge in "The Little Foxes," Mildred Dunnock is admirable. Margaret Philips gives a touching portrayal of a poverty-stricken aristocrat. There's a nice performance of a tart by Jean Hagen, and Bartlett Robinson, as the only gentleman in the whole affair, is gentleman enough to stand Regina up—which is why Miss Bankhead married Frank Conroy, if you-all want to catch up on everything.

Better go see "Another Part of the Forest." It will release all those emotions pent within you and you won't go around picking so many fights.

New York World-Telegram

NOVEMBER 21, 1946

'The Forest' a Modern Theater Classic

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

Lillian Hellman has written one more classic of the modern theater in "Another Part of the Forest." Going back 20 years she tells more about the roots of the Hubbard family of "The Little Foxes."

They had every reason to be so horrible. With airtight construction and great brooding tension, the playwright brings to life a week end that cemented the futures of Regina, Oscar and Ben.

Here is the 35-year-old Ben, a frustrated clerk for his father. He resents the growing wealth of the country, of which they are taking no advantage. His ambitious fires are banked, waiting to grab control of the wealth his parent, Marcus, has acquired by vicious means.

A Voracious Regina.

Regina is 20, already cold, selfish and indulgent. She is voracious, but passionate, no match for the clever older brother whom circumstances favor.

Oscar is 25, also a poorly paid clerk in his father's store. He is an impulsive weakling and "a proud illiterate."

Marcus is an autocratic head of the family, tempered only by his susceptibility to Regina, toward whom his possessiveness is painly incestuous. He sneers at the war-impoverished aristocrats, but hides from their hatred in music and learning.

Lavinia, the mother of this evil brood, has converted her disgust into a religious mania. Her one object in life is to run a school for Negro children near her old home, to atone for what she thinks is a sinful marriage.

Birdie a Frightened Girl.

Here, too, is Birdie, secret drinker of "The Little Foxes," now a frightened, silly girl, with a native courage that will be crushed out of her.

With this flock of vultures and wraiths, Miss Hellman has woven a tale of ever-impending horror in which the characters skin every decent instinct off the surface of each other. It is the sort of story that creates in you a physical desire for violence.

Regina wants to marry John, Birdie's cousin, an aristocratic dreamer whose only interest is to go to war again. Oscar, with typical taste, would wed a tart. Ben is already devoted only to money and power.

This loathesome cauldron starts bubbling when Birdie swallows her pride and asks to borrow money to save her family's desolate cotton plantation. The loan would be a lever for Ben to send Regina's lover, John, off to another war, and arrange his sister's marriage to a richer prospect.

Tautly Woven Events.

Across an intricate fabric of tautly woven events, Marcus retains the upper hand over his children. Only Regina seems likely to have her way.

But Marcus had not reckoned with his wife's religious fervor. In her rage at his failure to let her have her school, she lets fall to Ben a hint that Marcus is guilty of the crime for which years ago he was almost lynched. We leave the Hubbards grouped around Ben, after even Regina has walked away from her broken father.

"Another Part of the Forest" is so perfectly cast that it is hard to imagine replacing any but the least important hits.

Percy Waram is remote and malevolent with a snarling humor as the self-made profiteer. Broken by his son, he moves like a crippled eagle in a zoo.

Delicate Portrayal.

Mildred Dunnock does a magnificent job of sustaining the role of semihysterical Lavinia. It is a delicate portrayal at unnatural pitch of a mind swinging on one hinge. She is particularly good in the long exasperating scene when Ben pries out of her the truth about his father.

As the Ben, who alone finds any fulfillment in the play, Leo Genn broods with frustrated menace. When he at last conquers his father his authority is calmly absolute, closed to question.

Patricia Neal is a fine choice for the young Regina. Handsome of face and stature, she can be gulleful or malign. Her strong voice suggests the fiber of a woman she will become.

Full Negative Value.

Birdie here gets her full negative value from Margaret Phillips. She is a gentle woman with not a card stacked in her favor. Outstanding is her emotional denunciation when Marcus reneges on the loan he has promised her.

Scott McKay makes Oscar foolish and the shapeless youth he should be, and Jean Hagen is his outspoken light of love.

Miss Hellman has directed the play with the same pains and telling values with which she wrote it.

The Sun

NOVEMBER 21, 1946

Hellman's 'Another Part of the Forest' Is a Fascinating and Powerful Drama.

By WARD MOREHOUSE.

Lillian Hellman, concerned once more with despoliation in the Deep South, has written an unpleasant, fascinating and powerful drama in "Another Part of the Forest," brought into the Fulton Theater last night. Kermit Bloomgarden is the producer and he has his play for the next two years.

Miss Hellman packs her plays with dynamite. Her new one is a drama of blazing hatreds and bitter antagonisms in the house of Hubbard, that plundering family bound together by a common greed. There are portions of the play that are fairly overwhelming. It builds from act to act, and the strongest material, as in other Hellman pieces, is to be found in its final act.

"Another Part of the Forest" is of the searing stuff that made "The Little Foxes," to which it bears kinship, one of the most nourishing plays of our generation. The new Hellman work is a drama to stand sturdily on its own, and alone. But it ties up and dovetails with "The Little Foxes," presenting some of the same people twenty years earlier. The ravenous Hubbards of 1880 are already up to their all-devouring ways. Rottenness has already set in.

The town of the Hubbards is now identified as Snowden, Ala., still bearing the scars and bitterness of the civil war. Evil old Marcus Hubbard, as we find the clan in 1880, rules the household. He was a profiteer in the war, he is a tyrant in his own home, and is heartily despised in the community. His willful and ruthless daughter, Regina, now 20, is in love with, and is unwanted by, an aristocratic young neighbor who fought for the Confederacy and enjoyed every minute of it. The weaker son, Oscar, is trying to marry a young tramp from across the tracks. The other son, the wily Ben, is already out to better himself and has worked out a deal, a loan on land and cotton, by which he will pocket $5,000. But Regina, of equal cunning, exposes him, and the enraged father, somewhat incestuous along with everything else, orders Ben to leave home.

But Ben has a trick left. He discovers, through his babbling and feeble-minded mother, the father's secret—a secret which, if revealed, would bring on the lynching of old Marcus by the townsfolk. Ben, now the master, turns to blackmail and demands his price for silence. The old man is licked. He signs away his possessions and Ben begins making the rules and planning their future.

It's there, with Regina quickly shifting her allegiance from father to son, who has outsmarted him, that "Another Part of the Forest" ends, and right there, at 10:40 o'clock last night, it would have been all right with me if "The Little Foxes" had begun all over again. Both plays should be done some evening when the Actors Fund takes over.

Miss Hellman has done her own staging and has done a fine job of it. Jo Mielziner has supplied two stunning realistic settings showing the exterior and interior of the drowsy old mansion; Lucinda Ballard has come along with perfect costumes of the period, and the company assembled by Producer Bloomgarden gives the drama the acting it needs and deserves.

Percy Waram is a sly, dominating and often demoniacal figure as the vile old Marcus, who drove mules and learned Greek at 14. Mildred Dunnock is pathetic and terrifying as the balmy mother, her mind unbalanced by knowledge of her husband's misdeeds during the war. There is a superb performance from Patricia Neal as the young Regina, that devastating charmer, another from Jean Hagen, as the brazen trollop sought by the weakling Oscar, and still another from Margaret Phillips, the Birdie whose well-born kin have cotton and land and no money at all. Leo Genn, a fine actor, is just the man for the crafty, knowing Ben, and despite the fact that he lapses occasionally into his English accent. And these enthusiasms must also extend to Scott McKay, Bartlett Robinson and Beatrice Thompson.

"Another Part of the Forest" is full-bodied, vibrant theater, theater that Lillian Hellman can write. She has now done the trick five times out of six.

New York Post

NOVEMBER 21, 1946

Lillian Hellman's New Play Is Fascinating Drama

By Richard Watts Jr.

In "Another Part of the Forest," Lillian Hellman has written her most fascinating play. In the light of "The Little Foxes," "Watch on the Rhine" and "The Children's Hour," this is a rather strong statement to make, but, as excellent as they were, it is my impression that the new drama surpasses them all in sheer, overwhelming intensity of interest. It is also a brilliant and distinguished work, of enormous power and impact, but its deadly, serpent-like fascination is its most irresistible feature.

As everyone probably knows by now, "Another Part of the Forest" deals with the earlier activities of the fierce and rapacious Hubbard clan that battled its murderous way through "The Little Foxes." In it you encounter that evil trio: Regina, Ben and Oscar, when they are young, and see the unhappy Birdie, of the broken-down local aristocracy, before she has the ill-fortune to be married to Oscar. In addition, you meet the father and mother of the Hubbards, and find in them the worthy progenitors of such offspring.

While a knowledge of "The Little Foxes" adds to the interest and meaning of "Another Part of the Forest," it is by no means necessary to a comprehension of the new play. In fact, the kinship is noted so early in this contemplation, less because of the undoubted piquancy it provides for the current chapter in the savage saga of the Hubbards, than because it is now evident that Miss Hellman is engaged in a project that promises to achieve a major place in the modern drama. If, as has been reported, she is planning to continue her history of this family of cobras and it maintains its present standard, the result may well be one of the most important dramatic and literary investigations of a section of American society that has yet been accomplished.

Social History

Miss Hellman wisely and courageously has no fear of melodrama, and her play is filled with brilliant theatrical excitement. But always her work is more than skillful melodrama. Without going in for editorializing or explicit social consciousness, she manages to present a ruthless and incisive anatomical investigation into the rise of the industrial South that possesses social and historical as well as dramatic significance. For Miss Hellman is, among other things, becoming a social historian of provocative gifts.

Although it is a savage examination of the Hubbards that she conducts, this precious family is by no means a group of extravagant monsters. For example, Marcus, the father of the three central characters, is one of the most unpleasant scoundrels in the modern drama, yet even he is considerably more than that. There is something about his sententious but earnest striving for culture and his scorn for the romantic pretensions of the Confederate South which makes one understand a great deal about him and, while to understand, in his case, is certainly not to forgive, he becomes a human being, if a frightening one.

The play, incidentally, introduces the only decent member of the family, and she turns out to be an unfortunate lady not far from madness. It is one of the drama's pleasant ironies that this scorned and neglected mother is the one who brings about the destruction of the husband who had tormented her. Among the themes in this family history is the way even the triumphantly evil Hubbards are plagued by their own sins, and the relationship of the mother and father is a particularly striking example of it.

Family Hatred

Individually and as a family the Hubbards are fascinating. Their snarling, contemptuous, bitterly humorous scorn for each other is matched only by the way in which, without surrendering a trace of this hatred, they sardonically band together against the outside world. And they certainly do not pay the tribute to virtue hypocrisy is supposed to represent, for they are the frankest of scoundrels, as well as among the most vivid.

Miss Hellman has directed her own play brilliantly. Against two dramatically atmospheric settings by Jo Mielziner, a well selected cast plays splendidly. It is difficult to pick among them, but two of the most impressive performances are given by Mildred Dunnock as the half-mad mother and Margaret Phillips as the unfortunate Birdie, who later marries into the family. Percy Waram presents the monster of a father with memorable power, while Leo Genn, Scott McKay and the handsome young Patricia Neal not only resemble younger editions of the actors who played the same characters in "The Little Foxes" but are shrewdly in character. Mr. Genn is, in truth, so good that his occasionally obtrusive English accent does not harm his work.

"Another Part of the Forest" is one of the most fascinating plays of the contemporary American theatre.

"The Fatal Weakness"

DAILY NEWS

NOVEMBER 20, 1946

'The Fatal Weakness' an Urbane, Delightful Comedy for Ina Claire

By JOHN CHAPMAN

The George Kelly method of fashioning a smart comedy is far more subtle and artful than, say, the Noel Coward method. In concocting a light-hearted evening, Mr. Coward is the boss, the manipulator. His characters are his own inventions and they do his bidding. Their foibles, their jokes, their comicality is forced upon them.

Mr. Kelly, on the other hand, is a sly fellow. Instead of ruthlessly exposing his people he sits quietly by, a perfect gentleman at all times, and lets his characters expose themselves. His particular delight is to stand aside with a courtliness that almost hides his mockery and let women make fools of themselves.

A delightful example of the Kelly method is "The Fatal Weakness," which the Theatre Guild presented last evening at the Royale. In it is Ina Claire, returning after an absence of five years with an unimpaired authority over matters of high comedy. The play, Miss Claire, the supporting company and Mr. Kelly's direction combine neatly to offer an evening of intelligent, smooth fun. It is a kind of fun that goes a little deeper than laughter, for any exposure of human frailty is not without its sobering side.

Feminine Detectives.

"The Fatal Weakness" is a comedy of married life, but it makes no effort to reach for the loud laughs of a machine-made Mr. and Mrs. job like "Made in Heaven." It discloses Miss Claire as an attractive woman in her late forties at the moment of her discovery—by way of an anonymous but helpful letter—that her husband has another attachment.

The letter doesn't say who it is, but Miss Claire, with the inspired and highly amusing help of Margaret Douglass, sets about on some detective work. The method of detection would give the willies to a private eye like one of Raymond Chandler's men, or Dashiell Hammett's, for it is completely feminine and utterly cockeyed. But it works.

Miss Claire is, at first glance, a vague and voluble soul whose great passion is for weddings. She will go to anybody's wedding if she happens to read about it in the papers just so she can weep at the beautiful and awful solemnity of the marriage vows. Naturally one would think — and indeed Miss Claire would have thought—that a romantic like herself would be all broken up at the discovery of faithlessness in her own home.

But not at all. She adjusts herself quite reasonably—and adjusts herself also to a number of other facts of life, including the excessively modern thinking of her married daughter. Mr. Kelly is gallant enough not to destroy her or even her romanticism. Indeed, as one last sees her she is happily on her uninvited way to weep at her ex-husband's wedding to the other woman.

It isn't the plot that counts in "The Fatal Weakness." It's the personalities, and they are all genuinely amusing—the snooping friend (Miss Douglass), the unsuccessfully deceitful husband (Howard St. John), the insufferable daughter (Jennifer Howard) and the rather nice son-in-law (John Larson). And Mary Gildea plays an uncommonly funny maidservant. The attractive single set is by Donald Oenslager. It is a very good thing for American comedy to have George Kelly back in the groove.

'THE FATAL WEAKNESS.'

Play by George Kelly; setting and lighting by Donald Oenslager; staged by the author; costumes by Blanca Stroock; production under the supervision of Lawrence Langner and Theresa Helburn; presented by the Theatre Guild at the Royale Theatre Tuesday evening, November 19, 1946. The cast:

Mrs. Paul Espenshade.....Ina Claire
Anna.....Mary Gildea
Mrs. Mabel Wentz.....Margaret Douglass
Penny.....Jennifer Howard
Mr. Paul Espenshade.....Howard St. John
Vernon Hassett.....John Larson

SYNOPSIS. The entire action takes place in the apartment of Mr. and Mrs. Espenshade. ACT. I. A Saturday afternoon in June, about 1 o'clock. ACT II. Scene 1. The same day, about 4:30. Scene 2. An hour later. ACT. III. Scene 1. A Sunday evening in August. Scene 2. A Saturday afternoon, some months later.

New York World-Telegram

NOVEMBER 20, 1946

Ina Claire Charming In 'Fatal Weakness'

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

Ina Claire plays a grandmother with a mind like Peter Pan in George Kelly's new comedy "The Fatal Weakness." It is a delicate play with little more substance than a breath of passing perfume, and Miss Claire lends it fragile charm.

To Kelly's gallery of women he now adds Mrs. Espenshade, a sheltered anemone who has never had any reason to grow up, and is touched by emotion about as deeply as a kitten. Her weakness is romanticising everything.

She discovers her husband is unfaithful, and coincidentally realizes that her opinionated daughter Penny is ruining her own marriage.

Death of Romance

Her indignation at being deceived and her avid plans to spy on her husband have the unthinking enthusiasm of a child with a new game. It is the objective death of romance that disturbs her rather than any deep hurt.

She can view with some passion the impending disaster in Penny's life. She knows the phoniness of the girl's emancipated views and sees the danger in her grandson's progressive education. She can lie and threaten with mature conviction to make Penny go back to the husband she is losing.

She is sober and civilized when she makes the break with her husband and admits that she is not heartbroken but simply romantic. She is a stubborn child again as she plans her favorite pastime of attending a wedding, this time her husband's.

Shallow Facets.

Ina Claire has an uncanny understanding of this woman as she turns to view her many shallow facets.

She keeps the stage in a flurry of words and motion as this arrested grandmother tries out the shiny roller skates of a new idea. As her husband spins her a deceitful tale she reacts with great humor in the most normal mannerisms Mrs. Espenshade ever employs.

Miss Claire's artistry is never keener than in those moments when as Mrs. Espenshade someone appeals directly to the pure romance in her. Only then does this vague matron strike reality in a dreamy conception of herself.

Just let her husband say she is "intangible, always the essence of romance." Her eyes grow big and her face grows childishly exalted. Miss Claire then achieves the remarkable feat of being extremely funny, and at the same time becoming younger and more beautiful before your eyes.

Earthy People and a Wisp.

In this tale of earthy people surrounding a wisp, Margaret Douglass stands out as an old friend of the heroine. She is a blunt believer in divorce, realistic and lonely enough to be genuinely fond of Mrs. Espenshade.

Howard St. John gets a delightful superficial quality in his performance of the husband whose exhilaration is rightly interpreted as a sign of romance. His forced pleasure in his family and his quick retreats are always pleasantly impersonal.

Jennifer Howard, who somehow looks like no daughter of Miss Claire would ever look, makes of Penny one of those autocratic post-debutantes of which the cafes are full. She has all the exaggerated manner and surly superiority of the ignorant self-assured.

John Larson is a healthy, normal husband of Penny and Mary Gildea has some good moments as the maid who as far as weddings are concerned is the cynical opposite of her mistress.

Speech Realistic.

"The Fatal Weakness" is a carefully written play. Its speech is realistic and economical despite a few ragged moments at the premiere.

Mr. Kelly can write people talking just as they would in a living room, and here his direction adheres to that conception. No one ever raises his voice. Lines overlap, or are thrown away. The curtain falls on trailing speeches.

All this gives the production a living quality, but brighter emphasis and cleaner pace would dramatize and sharpen the play. On the other hand, Mr. Kelly is writing about people you might likely meet. He leaves you with the impression of having met them.

"The Fatal Weakness"—*continued*

The New York Times

NOVEMBER 20, 1946

Ina Claire Acts the Chief Part in George Kelly's New Comedy, 'The Fatal Weakness,' at the Royale

By BROOKS ATKINSON

Since Ina Claire is acting the lead, George Kelly's "The Fatal Weakness" must be a brilliant play. But on the basis of the performance displayed at the Royale last evening, this playgoer begins to wonder just what Mr. Kelly is driving at in a comedy of very mixed values.

Miss Claire is cast as the middle-aged wife of a middle-aged sport who is deceiving her. As usual, she is giving a sententious performance, clacking away at furious speed, dashing back and forth across the stage, nodding her bright head sardonically and darting her becks of laughter into every corner of the script. There is nothing funnier in New York than the opening scene when Miss Claire, wound up like a top with excitement, tries to talk over the telephone, read a letter, give orders to her maid and greet her sister simultaneously. That is the sort of irridescent stage situation she can translate into high comedy.

* * *

But Mr. Kelly, who is his own director, wants to have his laughs and kill them, too. Apart from being a comedy, "The Fatal Weakness" is also the drama of a woman whose native romanticism is being destroyed by her husband's faithlessness, a husband who has been cheerfully living an unpleasant life for many years and of a daughter with advanced ideas about marriage who is wrecking her home life by behaving like an evil-tempered snob.

For Mr. Kelly has invented some very strange characters. Everyone, except the characters in the play, naturally falls in love with Miss Claire, who has managed to make the part she is playing almost as credible as it is attractive. But it is difficult to take much personal interest in the others. And Mr. Kelly's final solutions are positively gruesome—the middle-aged philanderer marrying his mistress, the daughter reunited with her husband in an atmosphere of hatred and the divorced mother sneaking off like a demented matron to her former husband's wedding. Mr. Kelly can certainly give the human race a kicking around.

* * *

Possibly the trouble is that he has not decided whether he is writing capricious comedy, which can take great latitude in common sense, or psychological drama in which he is going to pillary the satanic female race. He has a remarkable facility for writing comic lines. He also has an ironic eye for female cunning and cynicism. One of his funniest scenes portrays two excited women "framing" the vagrant husband; aonther shows the chief character and her daughter trapping the same man in an artful, stealthy conversation. But the uncertainties of mood and the varying points of view turn "The Fatal Weakness" into a diffused play that is playing both sides of the street.

Opening his treasure box again, Donald Oenslager has designed a luscious living room in light and gay colors that are happily free from the drama's anxieties. Amid these soothing surroundings Mr. Kelly has directed a somewhat mechanical performance that is physically uneasy. As the disillusioned sister, Margaret Douglas is giving one of her expert performances in guile and irony. Jennifer Howard acts the idea-riddled daughter with a bitterness as unpleasant as it is well-planned and executed. As the husband caught off base, Howard St. John is acting amiably enough with some of the bluff and swagger of Mr. Kelly's "The Show-Off." There is a vigorous performance of the daughter's over-wrought husband by John Larson, and a friendly performance by Mary Gildea as the maid.

But Miss Claire is the only thing you can really depend upon in this odd eruption of comedy, drama, misogynism and brilliance.

New York Post

NOVEMBER 20, 1946

George Kelly's New Comedy Brings Back Ina Claire

By Richard Watts Jr.

Of George Kelly it may be said that he has never written a play—save for "Reflected Glory," which was not one of Tallulah Bankhead's happiest vehicles—that did not contain something marking him as the possessor of ideas and perceptions of uncommon sagacity. His comedies have had their high virtues and their grave faults, but from "The Show-Off" to "The Deep Mrs. Sykes" they have never failed to offer some insight into character and emotion, some observation of manners and morals, or some comment on a segment of society, that was wise, striking and suggestive of an original turn of mind. Whatever their flaws, they have been adult plays about adult concerns.

In "The Fatal Weakness," Mr. Kelly is just as talkative and as uninterested in plot as he can so frequently be, and he seems as oblivious as ever to the advantage of keeping things in his story moving along. He dawdles, he stops to contemplate his characters all over again, and he sometimes appears to feel that it is hardly worth his time to bother with his story at all. Yet, despite its loquacity and its thinness, his current work is so fresh in its observations, three-dimensional in its characters and human in its humor that it emerges as the first important new comedy of the season.

Among its great virtues is the fact that it brings back that unfailingly brilliant actress, Ina Claire, after far too long an absence. Miss Claire has always been a resourceful comedienne and a quietly effective emotional player, but I have never seen her in finer form than in Mr. Kelly's comedy, as she exhibits all her gifts for humor and character in the rich, full playing of a handsome lady who, in her middle forties, finds that she is losing her husband.

Study of a Romantic

If you suspect, at this point, that "The Fatal Weakness" is going to concern itself with the wife's sly reconquest of her erring spouse you do not know your George Kelly. What sets his heroine apart from the customary injured wife of the customary conjugal comedy is that she is in the fullest sense a true romantic. It is a quality which causes her, not merely to think of herself as a sad and wistful figure of romance, but to admire romance in others.

The effect that this singular fair-mindedness on the lady's part has upon her marriage is Mr. Kelly's story rather than mine. Nevertheless, he is so casual about it at times that I may be forgiven for advising you that one result is that when her husband tells her about the melancholy past of his mistress she is so deeply moved that she can't even bear to speak harshly to him.

Here, again, there is the danger of being unfair to Mr. Kelly. If he is not telling the conventional story of the valiant wife who fights to save her home, he is also not writing a farcical treatment of the same tale, as my brief glance at the plot may have suggested. The mood of his play, as well as its spirit, is comedy and the ending is, in its own way, a happy one, but the accent is always on the realistic examination of woman, marriage, time and society.

In at least two ways "The Fatal Weakness" differs from most of its author's work. As a rule he is, as in the unappreciated play of last season called "The Deep Mrs. Sykes," inclined to be devastating in his contemplation of female character, but here his study of his heroine is friendly and rather tender. He smiles at her, but it is with sympathy and understanding. Only in looking at her spoiled daughter does he show signs of annoyance, and even these are not deep.

The other difference is that the play shows more than a passing interest in the husband of the story. Where of recent years the dramatist, while more friendly to his men than to his women, has been a bit offhand in treating them, he not only makes the straying spouse sympathetic but studies him at some length. As I recall it, he is far less shadowy than the men who surrounded Mrs. Sykes last year.

Mr. Kelly is as good a director as he is a playwright, and, under his guidance, the excellent dialogue flows smoothly. All the actors deserve detailed consideration, but here it must be enough to say that Miss Claire receives particularly fine support from Margaret Douglass, Howard St. John and Jennifer Howard, who seem especially skillful. "The Fatal Weakness" shows an important American playwright in commendable form.

The Sun

NOVEMBER 20, 1946

'The Fatal Weakness' Talky but Penetrating, Ina Claire a Complete Delight.

By WARD MOREHOUSE.

George Kelly, a dramatist who frequently exhibits all the sharpness and unerring skill of a Clyde Fitch in writing of feminine foibles, takes up the case of Mrs. Espenshade in his new comedy, "The Fatal Weakness," submitted last evening at the Royale by the Theater Guild. Ina Claire returns to play the leading role and she is delightful.

The play is one of Kelly's best. It reveals a playwright going about his job with perception and keen understanding of character, particularly when dealing with those of the distaff side. The play is talky, but good talk it generally is, and when some one like Miss Claire is around to rattle off Mrs. Espenshade's speeches, and to play her quieter moments with rare poignance, the effect is often magical.

Kelly has a way of dramatizing the commonplace. In his writing and direction he gives tension to the little things. He can make drama out of a half sentence, make it and shape it with a glance, a pause, an inflection. His repetitions have their weight and purpose, and players in his comedies nearly always come through with better performances than they were giving before they came under his guidance.

The author of "The Show-Off" and "Craig's Wife" is now writing of a woman who discovers, after twenty-eight years of married life, that her husband is straying. She is jolted considerably but she is a creature of boundless sentimentality, of incurable romanticism. She has a mania for marriage ceremonies—she likes the music, the flowers, the laughter, the tears, the vows—just as the unforgettable Grandpa in "You Can't Take It With You" used to revel in graduation exercises. So, when she realizes that her husband is lost to her, she accepts the situation, gets a divorce, and works herself into no little emotional excitement as she prepares to attend his second wedding.

"The Fatal Weakness" slows down frequently. There are moments when it almost comes to a dead stop. It is on the weak side in its final scene, but Kelly has made a shrewd and discerning comedy of it. The talk is penetrating talk and his directorial finesse is in evidence all evening.

Miss Claire plays Mrs. Espenshade so archly, so artfully, so effortlessly that I'm now wondering how we've all managed to go through five long years without her. Howard St. John is very good indeed as the husband in his early fifties who falls in love with a woman osteopath. Jennifer Howard gives a dramatic and steadily interesting performance as the spoiled, arrogant daughter, brought somewhat to her senses by the crackup of the marriage of her parents. Margaret Douglas is very amusing as Mrs. Espenshade's vigilant friend. John Larson does nicely and so does Mary Gildea, long a Kelly favorite. Donald Oenslager has contributed a lush interior.

The theater is getting better. "The Fatal Weakness" gives Broadway its second successive evening of genuine quality. We may have a real season yet.

PM Exclusive

NOVEMBER 21, 1946

Kronenberger

George Kelly and Ina Claire Provide an Amusing Evening

In a well-regulated theater, there would be half a dozen comedies a year at least as good as *The Fatal Weakness*, and several that were better. But our theater does not seem very well regulated, and the *kind* of pleasure, however badly diluted, that Mr. Kelly gave me on Tuesday night needs advertisement ahead of analysis. The right first comment on *The Fatal Weakness* is that it is an entertaining evening for grown-up people. The second, I'm afraid, is that Mr. Kelly had up his sleeve less the ingredients for one particular, highly integrated comedy than certain scenes and characters that might find house room in a large assortment of plays. There is something rather haphazard about it all. But if Mr. Kelly's craftsmanship is far from organic, it is all the same sharp. If his story sense is languid and untidy, his comic sense is ingrained and sure. Moreover, he is George Kelly, one of the few people left on Broadway who sign their work with a signature instead of a rubber stamp. And Ina Claire is Ina Claire, a lady of decided personal style, who can blend a playwright's wit with her own and be adept while scarcely appearing to be attentive.

If *The Fatal Weakness* finds Mr. Kelly relaxed as an artist, that may be because it also finds him more indulgent as an observer. He is still at women here, but not at their throats. This time he is amused rather than astringent, even going in for some of the broad and easy spoofing that the women's magazines find safe, and brushing his comedy, at moments, with farce. In fact *The Fatal Weakness* would come close to being typical bright matinee stuff were not Mr. Kelly so implacably unsentimental and never, in his instincts, really unsound. His final curtain comes down on a wedding—but it is that of the heroine's husband to another woman.

• • •

The heroine, Ollie Espenshade, is an intensely romantic but otherwise rather undefined lady who hears that the man she has been married to for 28 years is unfaithful to her. Most of the play consists in her verifying this report with the help of an eager friend and an even eagerer friend of this friend. When the dossier is complete, Ollie—being very romantic about love in general, but apparently not very much in love herself—quietly gives her husband his freedom; and satisfying a final romantic impulse, departs for a sneak-view of his wedding. It cannot be said that Ollie is a very real or even consistent woman, but her predicament is rather Mr. Kelly's way of giving the play something to revolve around than an object for major dissection. It is the built-in scenes that count—several of them concerned with the marital troubles of Ollie's phonily "modern" daughter; the often funny talk; the feminine detail that Mr. Kelly has a gimlet eye for; the array of characters; and, of course, the general point of view. Mr. Kelly is writing several kinds of comedy here not all at a high level or with a fresh effect—but it *is* all comedy, including every last one of Mr. Kelly's five unhackneyed curtains.

Whether with a single inflexion or a spate of words, Miss Claire gives her part just about everything it needs except an inner life that Mr. Kelly forgot to provide. Margaret Douglass is capital as the sleuthing friend, Howard St. John is good as the husband, John Larson effective as the son-in-law, and Mary Gildea amusing as a maid. The daughter's role Jennifer Howard isn't quite able to levitate. Mr. Kelly's direction is full of noticeably good detail, and Donald Oenslager has provided a pleasant set.

—LOUIS KRONENBERGER

NEW YORK Herald Tribune
NOVEMBER 20, 1946

= By HOWARD BARNES =

A Strong Ina Claire

INA CLAIRE employs all her comic wiles to keep up a front of gayety in "The Fatal Weakness." George Kelly has made her work in his new comedy at the Royale Theater. For too much of the time the gifted actress is forced to prattle somewhat loquaciously, as an incurably romantic matron saves her daughter's marriage and loses her own. Fortunately for this Theater Guild production, the star is never daunted by a none too felicitous assignment. She spins through dull passages of exposition as though they were worthy of her grace and subtlety. When the author has been inspired to passages of eloquent understanding, she is nothing less than triumphant. It is good to have her pretending magnificently again.

• • •

Much of the pretense in this circumlocutional examination of wedlock, late flowering infidelity and feminine realization is repetitive and contrived. Kelly has chosen several interesting characters for supposedly witty dissection, but he takes an unconscionable time making them interesting to an audience. Mrs. Espenshade, even in the artful hands of Miss Claire, does not emerge as a believable figure until she has been submitted to a deal of less than uproarious caricature. Her vicarious romantic enchantment with her husband's errant amours eludes sustained dramatic statement. Her wise handling of her daughter's predicament is smothered in wordy encounters. "The Fatal Weakness" takes far too tedious a time reaching its comic resolution.

• • •

It will suffice for many that the ending is as wryly gay as the preamble is pedestrian. When Mrs. Espenshade settles accounts with her aging Paul, who tries to deceive her by describng his affair as a game of golf, the show has electric humor and a curious dignity. It is echoed brilliantly in the final scene, when the bereft wife is about to go off to see her divorced husband remarried and grace the ceremony with the symbol of romanticism which she feels herself to be. Had Kelly written more of his play in this vein, there would be genuine cause for rejoicing.

• • •

As it is, he has composed his satire gingerly, taking refuge in random passages of gossip rather than making them implement his theme. Margaret Douglass is excellent as the solicitous friend who pushes Mrs. Espenshade into a divorce she does not at all want. There are some sprightly contributions by Mary Gildea, in the part of a maid with pronounced opinions on the marriage sacrament. Jennifer Howard is far less successful in giving meaning or pungency to the role of the daughter who wants to think she is emancipated. As the husband who pushes over a domestic applecart, Howard St. John is good, but shadowy. Most of "The Fatal Weakness" is shadowy. It takes all of Ina Claire's artistry to make it glow occasionally with full-bodied delight. Donald Oenslager's setting is handsome, but Kelly has neither written nor staged much of high humor in the frame.

Journal American
NOVEMBER 20, 1946

'The Fatal Weakness' At Royale Theatre

By ROBERT GARLAND

The showshop is still alive and ticking. It was very much alive and ticking like a coo-coo clock last night at the Royale. There, as if to dispel the woe-is-meany dampness of "The Ice Man Cometh," The Theatre Guild produced George Kelly's new and adult comedy as the second offering of its overpoweringly Eugene O'Neill-ian season. The title of the funny piece is "The Fatal Weakness," Mr. Kelly made up a poem from which to quote it.

It is not a very good poem Mr. Kelly made up in explanation of his title. It is about a middle-aging Philadelphia lady who is congenitally unable to comb the orange blossoms out of her hair. She hears, I gather, up above the dance, or down beneath a crashing idol's fall, some hint, some fevered whisper of romance, some wedding bell in answer to her call. An incurable romanticist, she! Out on the Main Line, suburbia knows her widely and too well.

They were saying last night, from Fannie Hurst to Lucius Beebe, that the Mrs. Espenshade created by George Kelly, vitalized by Ina Claire, and gowned by Hattie Carnegie, has disappeared from the face of our America. From Lucius Beebe to Fannie Hurst, they are mistaken. Mr. Kelly knows better. Miss Claire knows better. Miss Carnegie knows better. I know better. And so, as the New Yorker is my witness, does Helen Hokinson.

• • •

Lady Osteopath

The Mrs. Espenshade of "The Fatal Weakness" is the Mrs. Espenshade known to her intimates as Ollie. Her husband is Paul. Her daughter is Penny. Her son-in-law is Vernon. Her friend is Mabel. Her maid is Anna. And, even if Miss Hurst and Mr. Beebe do move in citified circles where she is happily extinct, her real life name is legion. When not arranging orange blossoms or hearing wedding bells, she reads Fannie's books and Lucius' columns.

For three acts, for five scenes, from one Saturday afternoon in June to another in November, Mrs. Paul Espenshade is in and out of her fine Philadelphia apartment. She is wondering where her wandering husband philanders. She is finding out, to the most devastating detail, from Mabel Wentz, who has an offstage friend who sees, hears and tells everything. Paul is out of the bounds of matrimony. And with a lady osteopath.

Concurrently, the Espenshades' definite but undesirable daughter, Penny, is having trouble with her husband, Vern. And, which is delightfully unusual, Ollie sides with her son-in-law, urging him—and in no still, small voice—to leave her offspring flat and her offspring's offspring flatter. And so it ends, with the erstwhile Mrs. Espenshade, corsaged, veiled and eager, en route to her former husband's orange-blossomed wedding.

• • •

Ina Is Grand

All this, and quite a little more, George Kelly tells at the Royale. He tells it wisely, wittily and well, with many a hearty wisecrack stemming from his people in the story and his own innate distrust of women. Come to think of it, Mr. Kelly trusts no men-folk either. His Paul Espenshade is a black sheep in white sheep's clothing; his son-in-law is close cousin to a lamb.

As the play's pivotal Mrs. Espenshade, the Philadelphia lady with orange blossoms in her hair, wedding bells in her ears and romanticism in her eyes, Ina Claire is in finest form. She has never had a longer role, she has seldom had a more becoming one. Constantly in view, seldom saying one word when four will do, she returns from where she was with welcome warmth, undiminished charm and increased histrionic skill. She is grand!

Grandest among the others is Margaret Douglass who, as the Mabel Wentz who has a friend who sees all, hears all and tells all. Mary Gildea is straight out of Helen Hokinson's note-book as the faithful Anna. Howard St. John skips like a man as the philandering Mr. Espenshade. John Larson takes it and pretends to like it as Vernon Hassett. But Jennifer Howard should send her voice to be ironed as the unpretty Penny...

The showshop, God love it, is still alive and ticking. Take a bow, George Kelly and Ina Claire.

"Joan of Lorraine"

The New York Times

NOVEMBER 19, 1946

THE PLAY

By BROOKS ATKINSON

Pondering on the problem of faith, Maxwell Anderson has written a stimulating play in which Ingrid Bergman is giving a magnificent performance. "Joan of Lorraine" is the title. Heralded by a shrieking sidewalk audience of screen fanatics, it was acted at the Alvin last evening.

In general Mr. Anderson is saying that all men live by faith, despite themselves and despite the fact that articles of creed and faith cannot be verified. To illustrate his own faith, he has contrived a two-act drama in the form of a stage improvisation, with Joan of Arc as his heroine.

* * *

Like all Mr. Anderson's dramas, this one is sincere. Unlike some of them, it is written in excellent prose; and it is informal, like an intelligent discussion among people of high principle who are seriously wondering about sublime problems. Toward the end it seems, perhaps, to be overwritten and to be groping among abstractions, words taking precedence over ideas. But that does not alter the general impression that Mr. Anderson has written an engrossing play that is variously poignant, rhapsodic and genial and much above the common level of the theatre.

* * *

Whatever the essential quality of the play may be, there is no doubt about the splendor of Miss Bergman's acting. It fills the theatre with unaccustomed radiance. Six years ago Miss Bergman paused briefly in New York to play in a revival of "Liliom" en route to Hollywood. Her beauty was extraordinary then, and her gifts as an actress seemed to be considerable.

Since then her gifts have multiplied and prospered, and Miss Bergman has brought into the theatre a rare purity of spirit. Possibly Joan is an ideal part for her—"clear and clean and honest," as one phrase in the play puts it. The boy's dress becomes her, as do the simplicities of manner. But she transmutes the part into a sentient being by the glow of her spirit as an actress. In her playing Joan is, as you would expect, a rapturously attractive maiden with pride, grace and a singularly luminous smile. But Miss Bergman adds frankness, force and light that come out of her own wealth of perception, and hers is the Joan of religious aspiration and fable.

* * *

Not that Mr. Anderson has been any the less perceptive. He is thinking of Joan in those exalted terms. To keep his play from being stuffy, he has written it in the form of the rehearsal of a play about Joan in which the principal actress quarrels with the author's conception of the character. The improvised form endows the play with the idealized magic that dramas generally acquire when they use scenery and costumes sparingly. Some of Mr. Anderson's interruptions of stirring scenes in the career of Joan seem to be purely capricious, like stunts. But for the most part the style of free-hand sketching gives him a legitimate opportunity to relate Joan's experience to the problems of faith today, and to make "Joan of Lorraine" an original, interesting an comparatively painless excursion into thought.

* * *

Under Margo Jones' direction, the performance makes fascinating use of the form of the play—the tone varying from casual to portentous and grand, the transitions being artfully accomplished. As costumer, scene designer and wizard of the Edison electric lamp, Lee Simonson has caught the general idea perfectly, giving the production just enough visual adornment to keep it from dullness.

Mr. Anderson is fortunate in his actors, as is Miss Bergman in her associates. As the director and the inquisitor, Sam Wanamaker matches the commonness of the one role with the burning conviction of the other. Romney Brent is excellent as the Dauphin, edging the royalty of the part with mischievous humor. Harry Irvine's Archbishop conveys a cunning and wordly austerity. As the cynical financial agent of the Dauphin, Roger de Koven gives a capital performance. There are excellent performances in other parts by Kevin McCarthy, Martin Rudy, Timothy Lynn Kearse, Joanna Roos, Joseph Wiseman and many others.

As a matter of fact, everyone associated with "Joan of Lorraine" is in fine fettle. That is the kind of thing Mr. Anderson and Miss Bergman have brought to the theatre. Everyone acquires lustre from them.

'Joan of Lorraine'

A new play by Maxwell Anderson in two acts was presented last night by the Playwrights' Company at the Alvin. Starring Ingrid Bergman, the play was directed by Margo Jones, with settings, lighting and costumes by Lee Simonson.

THE CAST

Jimmy Masters	Sam Wanamaker
Al	Gilmore Bash
Marv Grey	Ingrid Bergman
Abbey	Lewis Martin
Jo Cardwell	Bruce Hall
Dellner	Kenneth Tobey
Charles Ellins	Charles Ellis
Parwell	Arthur L. Sachs
Garder	Peter Nobbs
Sheppard	Berry Kroeger
Le Ward	Romney Brent
Tessie	Timothy Lynn Kearse
McPaon	Henry De Koven
Kipner	Harry Irvine
Long	Kevin McCarthy
Noble	Martin Rudy
Quirke	Brooks West
Miss Reeves	Ann Coray
Miss Radler	Joanna Roos
Champlain	Joseph Wiseman
Smith	Stephen Roberts
Marie	Lotte Stavisky
Electrician	Himself

SYNOPSIS—Act I: The stage of a theater. Act 2: The same st ge an hour later.

New York Post

NOVEMBER 19, 1946

Ingrid Bergman Is Starred In Maxwell Anderson Play

By Richard Watts Jr.

Although Ingrid Bergman is one of the few celebrated Hollywood girls worthy of the popular enthusiasm bestowed upon her kind, the screaming, pushing mob of movie-mad idiots outside the Alvin Theatre last night made it seem likely that it would be a good thing if all screen stars were barred from the stage forever. Inside the Alvin, however, it became evident that no such edict should apply to Miss Bergman, as she went quietly about the business of bringing that modest but stirring magic of hers to bear on Maxwell Anderson's moderately interesting new play about Joan of Arc.

Indeed, the fact that Miss Bergman's return to the stage was the news of the evening has but superficially to do with her eminence in the Beverly Hills hierarchy. The important thing is the quality she imparts to Mr. Anderson's conception of the French heroine. She is not a remarkably brilliant actress in the technical sense, even though her final scenes are movingly played. What gives her the undoubted distinction she possesses is that strange and inescapable radiance, that quality of shining honesty and unaffected warmth which adds a unique loveliness and an irresistible air of lyric simplicity and directness to everything she does.

Her contribution to "Joan of Lorraine" is a notable one, since the drama decidedly needs the warm, candid and unaffectedly gracious spirit she brings to the heroine. For it is impossible for me to escape the impression that, while Mr. Anderson's play is almost steadily capable of holding one's interest, it is by no means completely satisfying or successful. It is certainly no "Truckline Cafe," but, on the other hand, it is no "High Tor," "Winterset" or "Mary of Scotland," either.

Challenges Shaw

For one thing, the playwright did rather too bold a thing when he dared to face Bernard Shaw in his own field. It may be unfair to Mr. Anderson, but it is impossible to watch his unfolding of the tragic story of the Maid of Domremy without remembering how Shaw treated the the same tale and how brilliant he had been about it. Where "Saint Joan" soared, "Joan of Lorraine" remains pedestrian. It may be hard on a conscientious and intelligent playwright to compare the new drama to one of the greatest of modern plays, but Mr. Anderson brought it on himself.

It appears, too, that Mr. Anderson was not unaware of the magnitude of his task and sought to alleviate it by making the story of the martyred Joan a play within a play. Therefore he devised the plot idea of showing a theatrical company rehearsing a drama about Joan of Arc and having the actress playing the title role disagree with the director about the interpretation of the character.

Backstage Atmosphere

The scenes with the cast sitting around and discussing their play and the general backstage atmosphere and small talk are lively and entertaining, but in the end the plot device does not greatly help "Joan of Lorraine" dramatically. It is Mr. Anderson's point that the actress felt that Joan should never compromise with evil in any way while the director felt such compromises were sometimes necessary. Since in the end the pair decide that she might compromise just a little but not on major issues, the difference of opinion turns out to be a slight one.

Mr. Anderson also has a few interesting things to say about democracy, faith and the position of the theatre as a sort of democratic cathedral, but he does not remain long on such issues. Most of the time he is merely telling the story of Joan, and, while it is interesting because the story itself is inescapably fascinating, he does not contribute a great deal to the narration.

Miss Bergman's performance is, of course, the event of the evening, but there is likewise an arresting portrayal of the director by Sam Wanamaker, who is a fine actor. Romney Brent is also excellent as the weak-willed, corrupt and faintly charming Dauphin, and Berry Kroeger brings to dramatic life a scene in which a cynical poet is won over by Joan.

"Joan of Lorraine" neither adds to nor decreases the dramatic stature of Maxwell Anderson, but it should make us all appreciate Miss Bergman.

NEW YORK Herald Tribune

NOVEMBER 19, 1946

= By HOWARD BARNES =

Broadway Adds a Star

THE radiant Ingrid Bergman brings theatrical sorcery to a discursive script in "Joan of Lorraine." She moves serenely through Maxwell Anderson's ratiocinations at the Alvin Theater, touching them with wonder and splendor. Her Maid of Orleans is a figure to be remembered with gratitude and deep satisfaction. In it burns the fierce affirmation of faith which the author kindles only fitfully in his play within a play. The labored truisms of the drama become quick with subtle meaning and inner effulgence in Miss Bergman's performance. A celebrated actress of the screen has served notice that she is with few peers in the whole realm of make-believe.

• • •

As a play, "Joan of Lorraine" is only intermittently rewarding. It has been Anderson's notion to disclose some contemporary murmers in the process of rehearsing a show about the French country girl, her voices and her tragic destiny. It has permitted him a series of planes in his exposition, as the leading lady refuses to portray Joan in her moment of terrified compromise, but rises to the supreme test of the final scene. It has permitted him a number of asides about the state of the theater, democracy and man's stubborn insistence on believing in what he believes in, no matter how impractical that position may seem. With Sam Wanamaker acting as stage director and inquisitor, there is more than one moment of theatrical magic in the device. Without Miss Bergman in the central role, it would all seem highly contrived and loquacious.

• • •

There is nothing ponderous about this New Playwright's Company production when the star is concerned in the proceedings. With extraordinary delicacy and range of expression, she changes from a girl playing a part to the Saint herself, stamps out of a rehearsal in indignation over the play's lack of idealism and then brings it to a transcendent finale. By refusing to underline Anderson's vagrant profundities, she clothes Joan with such warmth and understanding that the characterization itself takes the place of eloquent and artful writing. "Joan of Lorraine" is almost wholly Miss Bergman. The author has given her a point of departure for a rich and variegated portayal and she takes over triumphantly.

• • •

It would be idle and unfair to deny Anderson's skill and sincerity in passages of the work. His stage conception of how a play takes shape and emotional excitement in rehearsal is sound and occasionally fascinating, particularly when Wanamaker is probing the tricks of theatrical projection as a director. There are scenes in which Romney Brent, as an especially craven dauphin, confronts Joan and Kevin McCarthy, playing Dunois splendidly, which ring with clarity and theatrical effect. In between are tedious passages in which the author has used his stage stunts to hold up a rickety soap-box. It is not what he has to say about the world and its problems, but what Miss Bergman says as a memorable Joan that makes for sense and enchantment at the Alvin.

• • •

The staging of the two acts has been adroit, whether accomplished by Margo Jones, or Wanamaker, who took over for her. There is excitement about the rehearsals of the play which is conjured up more by the movement of the players than the things they have to do. Lewis Martin, Joseph Wiseman, Harry Irvine and Timothy Lynn Kearse are some of the performers who ably assist Miss Bergman. Lee Simonson has tended to the settings, lighting and costumes, or the lack of them, ingeniously. "Joan of Lorraine" gives a very fine actress a chance to assert her artistry, despite its dramatic limitations.

Journal American

NOVEMBER 19, 1946

'Joan of Lorraine' Presented at Alvin

By ROBERT GARLAND

The theatre is itself again.

Last night, Maxwell Anderson's new play, "Joan of Lorraine," came to the Alvin, bringing with it every good thing of which the theatre is made. There, on 52nd st., is a play within a play, a heady mixture of drama and melodrama, bitterness and beauty, romance and reality, belief and disbelief. And, in and all about the entire undertaking is a moving and impassioned plea for a return to the simple faith that passes understanding.

Yes, the theatre is itself again and there is many a righteous reason for rejoicing on Broadway, from Times Square to Columbus Circle. For Mr. Anderson's new work is no pretty piece of high-toned make-believe whipped up overnight for professional intellectuals to gape at. Instead, it is a drama of substance and invention, a play to warm the cockles of the ardent playgoer's heart, a show—if you prefer the word—to be shown-off in the show-shop.

And shown-off it is by the players selected, both well and wisely, by The Playwrights' Company, of which Mr. Anderson is first member. It was, I am sure, sheer inspiration to have cast Ingrid Bergman as the Mary Grey who, rehearsing in the play within the play called "Joan of Lorraine," has more faith in The Maid of Orleans she is striving to portray than the author has in his own creation. Miss Bergman *is* Mary Grey. And Mary Grey *is* Joan of Arc.

• • •

Play Within Play

The theatre being itself again, it is indeed a happiness to tell you—or to even try to tell you—how it managed to get that way last night in the Hollywood-haunted auditorium of the Alvin. It managed to get that way by being easily and exactly what it is, a show to be shown-off in a show-shop. A good show, you may believe me. A good show that tells a good story, teaches a good lesson, and, while doing so, provides a good evening's entertainment.

As I have herebefore reported, "Joan of Lorraine" is a play within a play in which a plea for a return to the faith that passes understanding is side by side with a plea for the betterment of chairs provided by the Messrs. Shubert. For while the one play has to do with the producing of a drama whose leading lady knows more about the central character than the playwright himself, the other play has to do with an inspired peasant girl from Domremy.

This inspired peasant girl from Domremy talks with God, talks back at kings and finally talks herself into a bonfire and a sainthood. And Mary Grey, destined to represent her on the stage of almost any modern playhouse, sees her as an immortal in the making, while the off-stage dramatist who created her in the first place sees her as a sometimes angelic opportunist. How they work things out between them is the outer and inner plays combined.

• • •

They Get You

Most high among the privileged players chosen by The Playwrights Company for the greater power and glory of Maxwell Anderson's "Joan of Lorraine" is Ingrid Bergman, who pretends to be the actress pretending to be The Maid. To this peasant girl from Domremy, a personage it has been her life's ambition to portray, Miss Bergman brings a skill, an integrity and a luminosity all too rare along the easy-going Broadway of today. They get you!

They got me last night, I am telling you. And, along with the other members of a large, luxurious and appreciative congregation, they held me until the final curtain fell and the final encore was completed. They have got me now. So thoroughly have they held me spellbound—Miss Bergman's skill, integrity and luminosity—that I have forgotten to tell you how worthy are Miss Bergman's supporting players and surrounding settings.

Among these worthy supporting players are Sam Wanamaker, doubling impressively as Director and Inquisitor; Romney Brent, taking Les Ward and The Dauphin in his stride, and Kevin McCarthy, pretending to be a guy named Long and the Bastard of Orleans. Lee Simonson's settings, lighting and costumes could not be bettered. Margo Jones' direction is admirable and assured. Were Alexander Woollcott alive and writing, there would be dancing in the streets today...

The theatre is itself again, God love it!

The Sun

NOVEMBER 19, 1946

Bergman Brilliant in 'Joan of Lorraine,' Anderson's Drama of Maid of Orleans.

By WARD MOREHOUSE.

Earth tremors in West 52d street last night were brought on by the arrival of a Hollywood girl, Ingrid Bergman, in Maxwell Anderson's new play, "Joan of Lorraine," put on at the Alvin by the Playwrights' Company as its first production of the season. There was tumult outside the theater before and after the performance, and inside the theater at its conclusion as the star was given an ovation.

Let it be recorded at the outset that Anderson's play, if not one of sustained excitement, has a certain force, distinction and dignity and that Miss Bergman, much improved since she was here six years ago in "Liliom," turns in a brilliant performance. She is quite the most capable of the Hollywood players to come this way in a long time.

Maxwell Anderson uses a play within-a-play device for his telling of the story of Joan of Arc, presenting rehearsal scenes of a play about the saint of Orleans and other scenes devoted to the incidental mechanics of a run-through rehearsal. "Joan of Lorraine" is played in two acts on a bare stage, with some players in costume and others in rehearsal clothes. A few props are used, but there is no scenery save for the black wall of Joan's bleak prison cell, in which she makes her decision to die by fire.

In "Joan of Lorraine" Anderson registers his plea for the necessity of having a faith. He contends that compromise with evil is often a practice and a necessity. He asks, "Why do we believe what we believe?" as he comments on the state of the world and the human race. But his Maid of Orleans is presented and projected as a saint who is above compromise and who chooses the alternative in death by fire.

Some of Anderson's out-of-character scenes provide better theater than those of the actual play in rehearsal, but his retelling of the story of the peasant saint grows stronger toward its finish, and Miss Bergman is at her best in the solitude of her prison cell as the Voices come to her in her hour of indecision.

This actress from out of the West has beauty, tenderness and eloquence; she is excellent in voice and gesture and is particularly skillful in making the transition from the colloquialism of her off-stage moments to those of her in-character interludes. She is in full command of the play and the stage as Anderson's drama comes to its close, and the ovation accorded her was tremendous. And it came from the season's most attentive audience, and one that seemingly experienced no hardship in getting into its seats by 8 P. M. for a performance that began at 8:07.

There is a first-rate performance from Sam Wanamaker as the harassed director of the play about Joan of Arc, a director in contact conflict with the star as to the play's meaning. Wanamaker is casual, forceful and believable. Romney Brent is amusing as that evil one, the Dauphin. There are good characterizations from Harry Irvine, Berry Kroeger and Lewis Martin. Margo Jones has staged the play capably, particularly the out-of-play scenes, and Lee Simonson's costumes and lighting are excellent.

"Joan of Lorraine" is a forceful, if somewhat unwieldy drama, a more than moderately effective play by a dramatist who asserts that the great things of the world are brought about by dreamers who have a faith—and who are willing to die for it. Ingrid Bergman has a fine evening. The Alvin's new play will be right there for as long as she cares to play it.

DAILY NEWS

NOVEMBER 19, 1946

Miss Bergman and Mr. Anderson Score Hits in 'Joan of Lorraine'

By JOHN CHAPMAN

In "Joan of Lorraine" Maxwell Anderson, a writer, holds his own against Ingrid Bergman, the ranking screen star. This takes no little doing, for the presence of Miss Bergman is well-near overpowering. She has a remarkable hold not only upon the jostling boobies who infested the sidewalk at the Alvin last evening, but also upon more serious folk who respect sincere purpose and great ability.

Yet Anderson holds his own, and "Joan of Lorraine" stands out as a play rather than a vehicle. It is a good play, too—novel in construction, admirable in language and worth listening to as a statement of belief. The Playwrights' Company has mounted it beautifully and given it an excellent cast, and Margo Jones, the director, has infused it with fine vitality.

As dramatists have done from Shakespeare on, Mr. Anderson concerns himself with Joan of Arc and what it was that made her tick—what it was that made a teen-age, small-town girl into a great general, into the inspiration of a nation and into a saint of the Roman Church.

What Made Joan Tick?

As did Joan's inquisitors themselves, Anderson wonders if the voices she heard were real, and if so just what kind of reality they had. If I heard him aright, he concludes that Joan's greatest faith was not in a God who spoke to her from the sky, or in the Saints Catherine and Margaret who also spoke, but in herself. For one moment before her execution Joan's faith in herself—her own knowledge of rightness—faltered; but in another moment she regained it and went to the stake. In going to the stake she became a symbol of faith for all time and to all creeds.

"Joan of Lorraine" is not precisely a play within a play, but rather a play about a play. Its locale is the stage of the Alvin Theatre, upon which is gathered a fairly ordinary-looking group of people who are, mostly, actors.

These actors are rehearsing a drama about Joan of Arc, trying to make it come alive amid the rickety chairs and shoddy benches of a rehearsal. Their director tells them that, now that they have put in three weeks' work, they may hope for a miracle to happen one day—the miracle in which a performance begins to glow with life.

Mary Grey, the star playing Joan, can't feel the miracle coming. She knows Joan and does not believe that the Maid of Orleans would compromise—or could compromise—with the weak fool she made a king and the knaves of his entourage. She is about to walk out on the play, feeling that the author has not written Joan right. But, in a rehearsal of a scene in the girl's cell just before the execution, the miracle of the theatre occurs: Mary grasps the belief that Joan's integrity is a faith in herself.

Anderson Speaks, Too.

Mr. Anderson's backstage atmosphere is so effective that one is watching not a play but a play in the making, and it is most interesting theatre. The characters shift in an instant from reality to make-believe. They discuss Joan's beliefs for a while, then knock off and discuss Mr. Anderson's—which, in addition to being Joan's own, include the notion that the theatre is a fount of democracy in a very shoddy state of repair.

Miss Bergman's performance is a radiant one and its radiance is not alone in her beauty. As Mary Grey she is a serious, stubborn actress, arguing with her director and criticizing the playwright. As Joan she is inspired—a young, simple girl moved by a force she can't define. Mr. Anderson has provided a wide range of playing for Miss Bergman and she meets the challenge gallantly.

In the role of the director, Sam Wanamaker gives a perfect performance. Romney Brent is silly, weak and amusing as the Dauphin, and all the other members of a large company have caught the spirit of the drama. The result is a highly satisfying evening in the theatre.

Lee Simonson's sets and lighting are simple and effective.